

Book Reviews

Bucke, at the London Asylum in Canada, embraces such an entity is more questionable. S.E.D. Shortt's monograph has certainly taken a bold leap, incorporating a general review of the development of Victorian medical psychology with a detailed analysis of data from an Ontario asylum and its keeper, but the result is top-heavy and awkward. The enterprise parallels one of Bucke's, his all-explanatory *Cosmic consciousness* (1901, many reprints, eight publishers, a German translation in 1975), which derived from a hero-worship of Walt Whitman, an ecstatic experience in an English hansom cab, and more than twenty years cloistered in an asylum superintendency.

Consisting of five chapters and over forty pages of annotation, the work reads more like five articles rather roughly stitched together. Chapter 1 is a brief biography rather too full of subjunctives, such as "Bucke might later have felt an affinity . . ." and unnecessary details of famous medical contemporaries. Chapter 3 is too broad in its sweep. Titled 'Toward a secular physiology of a mind', it attempts a complete picture of the nineteenth-century philosophy of mind, and is doomed to be obscure and colourless.

The final chapter explores Bucke's use of gynaecological surgery and finds it ineffective but fails to consider the wider surgical assault on mental patients. By contrast, the rich details of 'The human ecology of the London Asylum' (Ch. 2) and the useful discussions in 'The social genesis of etiological speculation' (ch. 4) are of surprising value. About one-fifth of attendants resign annually; the case notes are scant, sometimes reporting as alive those who have been dead for two years; chronicity abounds. Yet "degeneration theory . . . lifted alienists from the stigma of therapeutic defeat to the pedestal of social prophecy", and Shortt clarifies usefully this relationship between theory and practice.

Compared to the integrated detail of Michael MacDonald, Anne Digby, or Nancy Tomes, this is a slighter work because by reaching at grander themes it has made worryingly trivial mistakes. Who, for example, was Robert Gardiner Hall? Who was James Pritchard? What is a "medical mindset"? We are told of Bucke's "peculiar ways", "his loud laughter", "his fluctuations in mood", his search for a "less strenuous form of medical employment", the political placemanship that got him his job as superintendent. Such loopy incompetence may well have been typical of Victorian alienists, yet is never described as such and it is this failure to distinguish the second-rate from the mad, the relevant from the coincidental, that undermines this work.

The detailed analysis of Victorian psychiatry, both in the asylums and in its social context, goes on apace and provides an exciting research enterprise. Many of these themes are touched on by Shortt, and we urgently need a detailed analysis of the operative practices, for example, of these times. Likewise, the resort to cosmic and utopian notions, and their espousal by cranky physicians, would be in itself an interesting exploration. Victorian lunacy is much "more than interpretation", despite the author's assertion to the contrary.

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JOSEPH C. PORTER, *Paper medicine man. John Gregory Bourke and his American West*, Norman and London, University of Oklahoma Press, 1986, 8vo, pp. xviii, 362, illus., \$22.95.

Some readers of this journal will be familiar with J. G. Bourke's *Scatalogic rites of all nations* (1891) as a source for the therapeutic uses of excrement. A German translation (Leipzig 1913) was introduced by Freud. Others may know Bourke as the author of *The medicine men of the Apache* (1892) which was reissued in 1970. Few, one would guess, have any inkling of the story behind these books: the heroic, crowded, and all-too-short life of Captain John Gregory Bourke, US Army (1849–96). One of Bourke's greatest achievements, and perhaps the only one not frustrated by events, was that, in the midst of strenuous and ultimately fatal exertions, he kept a journal recording in rich detail his observations of the American Indians. His incessant writing caused one Indian to give him the sobriquet that forms the title of this volume—an appropriate one, for the 124 volumes of his diary, now at West Point, are the most important source for the book.

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The book tells how Bourke was converted from the commonplace opinion that the “only good Indian was a dead Indian” (p. 59) to a more rounded view and finally to an intimate fellow-feeling with (in particular) the Chiricahuas and the Western Apaches. His admiration was initially roused by the Indians’ skill and courage in resisting his own forces in battle, and then heightened by comparison between the best of the Indians and the worst of their white neighbours—demagogues, journalists, and middlemen who stood to profit from a policy of enforced impoverishment for the Indians. A turning-point for Bourke was the US government’s breaking of the Fort Laramie agreement (1875) when prospectors discovered gold on land which it had conceded to the Lakotas, one of several acts of official treachery which embarrassed Bourke’s code of honour. Disgusted by the brutal means used towards dubious ends, Bourke, while still an army officer, became an ethnologist, aiming to record details of the vanishing aboriginal way of life, to ease the path of the Indians towards a worthwhile way of living in compatibility with the Anglos, and to develop the intellectual sophistication of ethnology itself.

Bourke’s personal path led him through some extraordinary experiences, which are here described in his own words: the Sun Dance of the Oglalas, the Snake Dance of the Hopis, and the Urine Dance of the Zunis. Given his familiarity with so many Indians, it is only to be expected that his observations on Indian clinical medicine rank as primary evidence, for instance his records of puerperal fever among the Cheyennes (p. 63) and of Apache midwifery (p. 198). Medicine was one of the subjects on which he encouraged his Apache friends to discourse in his attempt to retrieve tribal lore from oblivion (p. 182), from which one infers that, although clinical medical subjects form only a small and scattered part of the book under review, there is more such material still embedded in the manuscript of the diary. If so, this book is an essential introduction to it.

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JANE B. DONEGAN, *“Hydropathic Highway to Health”: women and water-cure in antebellum America*, New York, Westport, Conn., and London, Greenwood Press, 1986, 8vo, pp. xx, 299, illus., \$35.00.

Hydrophathy, the alternative healing sect also called water-cure, thrived in America from the early 1840s to the end of the 1850s. During this brief period, its practitioners founded establishments for treating affluent patients and sought legitimacy by setting up professional organizations, publishing journals, and creating medical schools. Never large, the sect was, however, exceptionally rich ideologically, bound as it was by its social philosophy and recruits to such contemporary reform movements as antislavery, feminism, temperance, dress reform, vegetarianism, and perfectionism. Hydrophathy offered Americans not only a cure for disease by the creative external and internal use of water but also a plan of natural living designed to counterbalance the evils of civilization and bring about physiological and moral salvation. This book is less than the full exploration hydrophathy deserves, as Professor Donegan recognizes. But its limits also account for part of its strength. By restricting her focus to New York State—the earliest and most vital stronghold of hydrophathy in America—the author can present her study in more thorough detail than a broader scope would allow. An by concentrating on the signal appeal of hydrophathy to women, she draws a diffuse topic into the analytical mainstream of American cultural history.

Hydrophathy’s special relationship to women, Donegan explains, was rooted in its two-pronged crusade to free people from the domination of orthodox doctors and their heroic therapies and from unnatural, artificial ways of living that produced disease and chronic invalidism. To women as patients, it held out the promises of mild treatment and a considerable measure of control over their own bodies. In particular, pregnancy, parturition, and post-partum recovery all were managed in self-conscious accordance with nature, with medical attention focused on diet, hygiene, and the use of water. At a time when orthodox doctors were